

## Arts in S.A. will be focus of Monday's public forum

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**Publication Date** : June 6, 2004

Spreading the arts more evenly around the city and improving art education are likely to be hot topics at the first community forum sponsored by the Office of Cultural Affairs for the Cultural Collaborative.

Part of a two-year cultural planning process, the forum will be held from 5: 30 to 7: 30 p.m. Monday at the San Antonio Central Library. The public is invited to participate in the session that will focus on City Council Districts 1 and 2.

"Like any city, San Antonio is complex and there are lots of different views about what arts and culture can be," said Jerry Allen, a cultural planning consultant who will moderate the session. "But I think San Antonio has some underlying strengths, such as the strong folk culture that could be celebrated more in fiestas and festivals. We also expect to hear a lot about what the arts can do to help with neighborhood revitalization."

The Cultural Collaborative kicked off last fall with an appearance by Richard Florida, author of "The Rise of the **Creative** Class." An outline of its findings so far can be viewed at [www.sanantonio.gov/art](http://www.sanantonio.gov/art).

Based on meetings with arts professionals, the process has identified eight major issues: arts in education, cultural infrastructure, civic aesthetics/public art, **creative** individuals, resources, neighborhood revitalization, advocacy and tourism.

"One thing that's coming out of San Antonio's plan is a need to expand the definition of what constitutes the **creative** community," Allen said. "Florida's book has shown that the **creative** community has a commercial side that includes software creators along with the artists generally associated with the nonprofit institutions. This group wants to be recognized and supported, too." Expanding the arts beyond the city's downtown core is also a key issue.

"We've heard from several people that they would like to have some access to the arts close to where they live," Allen said. "Another resource that San Antonio has is lots of real estate that has resulted from the closing of military bases. This plan might come up with ways of better using those facilities, much like Austin turned its old airport into a post-production facility that has added a lot to the **economy**."

Ava Lambert, arts program coordinator, said the forum is designed to allow everyone to "give their two cents' worth."

"We want to open up the process and we thought these public forums was the easiest way," Lambert said. "First, we'll explain what the Cultural Collaborative is all about. Then we'll discuss some of our findings so far. Finally, we'll listen to anyone who wants to speak."

"I think education will be a major issue. We know that arts education isn't all it should be in San Antonio. We're also concerned about cultural resources, since the city has so few large corporate donors. And we know that people want the arts in their neighborhood, even to go all the way out to Loop 1604. But who knows what issues will come up? That's why we want to open it up to the public."

After Monday's meeting, the Office of Cultural Affairs has scheduled five more public forums through October. Each session will combine two City Council districts. The next session is

scheduled for July 6 at Palo Alto College for Districts 3 and 4.

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